

I-20 and Nissology¹

Grant McCall
University of Sydney²
&
Jeju National University³

Abstract

I would extend the concept of “precariat” to islands and to nations. In the case of islands, global climate change may literally force people to evacuate their homes as the sea level rises over their shores. The loss of one’s livelihood can take many forms and come about in many ways, particularly in a globalised world where forces friendly and fierce can overwhelm without warning. But our subject here is islands: small potentially future green islands and why we must think big about small islands. As has often been said and written, our Earth is a relatively small place isolated in the vastness of intergalactic space and, as far as we know, the only place where we as humans effectively can survive. Just as people on small islands must get along to prosper, so must we humans do the same on our small island earth. Perhaps this is the nissological lesson that islands can teach us: how to survive and grow on our small green islands on our small blue planet?

Key words :

Nissology, AOSIS, Islands-20 Initiative, Gobekli Tepe , precariat, global climate, The Jeju Massacre

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2) Department of Anthropology, The University of Sydney, Australia.

3) World Environment and Island Institute, Jeju National University.

Introduction

Nissology⁴ is the study of islands on their own terms and has been used as an organising theoretical construct in discussions on Jeju Island and elsewhere.

It is the main principle that informs this reflective paper that attempts to discuss how the concept relates to the proposal for I-20 to be incorporated into debates in international fora about improvements in the fairness and furtherance of world systems of effective governance.

Using examples for the world's islands in the "Seven Seas", I propose that the future of islands is the future of humans; that the islands are Nature, unyielding and autonomous unto themselves as a physical mass, whilst Identity is what humans make of their topos, their place. I argue from a Nissological point of view that islands cannot progress towards a Green Future without self-determination as it is only in the hands of Islanders that durable decisions can be made as to how to proceed. Nissology, "the study of islands on their own terms" gives us navigational tools to achieve carbon free and truly sustainable human life. Islands shall endure, but can humans?

My argument proceeds from an examination of what happens when islands once known for spectacular creativity and innovation are conquered and lose those enthusiasms. I take examples from the ancient Mediterranean world of peace and creativity culture on Malta, Crete, Minorca, Sardinia and Corsica.

I introduce the concept of "Nissology: the study of islands on their own terms", before considering sovereignty and autonomy.

Islands often are taken to be a microcosm for planet Earth and I agree with that perspective to some extent, if we remember that islands have their own sovereign characteristics and respectful integrity.

Conceptions of Islands Today

It is common to refer to islands today as being "vulnerable" or small scale; islands typically are the focus of belittlement by economists and political planners, being ordinarily viewed only as holiday destinations.

Island states themselves take up this rhetoric. For example, the logo of AOSIS⁵, depicts small dots of large sub-Oceanic mountains poking (timidly?) up

4) Grant McCall. 1994. "Nissology: The study of islands". *Journal of the Pacific Society* 17 (October): 1-14; and Grant McCall. 1996. "Clear confusion in a disembedded world: The case for Nissology". *Geographische Zeitschrift* 84: 74-85.

5) Alliance of Small Island States <http://aosis.org/> : Accessed on 4 May 2016.

above waves. AOSIS self-describes as

... a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal countries that share similar development challenges and concerns about the environment, especially their vulnerability to the adverse effects of global climate change. It functions primarily as an adhoc lobby and negotiating voice for small island developing States (SIDS) within the United Nations system.

The website goes on to present AOSIS members as mendicants, who require help owing to special problems and difficulties. AOSIS members appear as victims, mainly of climate change. The first press release on the AOSIS website is dated 18 September 2012, noting that the organisation consists of "43 low-lying and coastal states that are highly vulnerable to climate change: The most recent press release links the group to the Paris Climate Change Agreement where 167 countries signed the concluding document on 12 December 2015.

AOSIS reached its greatest prominence when 2014 was declared the "International Year of Small Island Developing States".⁶

Related, but older in foundation, is another United Nations body, SIDS, Small Island Developing States, established in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. SIDS is part of UN-OHRLLS, the United Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.⁷ Again, the group is characterised as "...a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities".

With few exceptions (Singapore and Bahrain), the fifty-two listed SIDS are poor.⁸

Even the concept of "Island" or "Island State" is eschewed by countries of means. For example, the United Kingdom is as archipelagic as Indonesia, but does not list itself as being island in character, except in the occasional poem or artistic work. Island states in the Pacific Ocean include the Philippines, but not Japan. Powerful countries do not want to be called "island countries".

So belittlement and avoidance of island association are very much a part of how islands think about themselves, and how their neighbours regard them.

But, it is typical also that countries will dispute over islands for economic and strategic reasons. There are several other examples, but suffice to point to one: Japan and Korea dispute over who owns a small outcropping, called on many maps "Liancourt Rocks". Dokdo (Korean) or Takeshima

6) <http://aosis.org/aosis-members-joins-secretary-general-in-early-ratification-event/>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

7) <http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

8) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Island_Developing_States. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

(Japanese) lies about 216 km east of the Korean peninsula or about 157 km northwest of Oki Island, Japan. One article on the dispute concludes:

Although claimed by both Korea and Japan, Dokdo Island is currently administered by the Republic of Korea. Both nations' claims extend back at least several hundred years. Significant arguments supported by a variety of historical evidence have been presented by both parties, which have been challenged by counter-arguments with varying degrees of success. North Korea supports South Korea's claim.⁹

It surprises me that more is not made on the Korean peninsula of this rare confluence of ideas between the northern and southern partners, having the potential to join with other elements on the reunification talks that come and go over the years.

Disputes over islands can exist even where islands themselves do not as is the case with China's construction of islands in the South China Sea.¹⁰ A dramatic time lapse graphic published on the New York Times website shows the extent of this construction from August 2014 to September 2015, with I assume even more to the present day Spratly Islands. This area between continental Vietnam and archipelagic Philippines and Malaysia involves a number of states in the region. These competing claims raise tensions for the strategic and economic elements involved.

Disputes over more substantial islands have led to their division in the past, such as the case in the Caribbean of Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island of Hispanola that dates from 1697. More recently, Turkey questioned the Greek character of Cyprus that led to military conflict in July 1974 and the declaration of the frankly named, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.¹¹

So, islands today are belittled, but valued enough to provoke the risk of open conflict. They are mendicant states, vulnerable and susceptible to disaster, but prized highly as places for holiday relaxation and as a basis for economic development, as seen from continental places.

Islands in the Ancient Mediterranean

Mark Patton (1996)'s *Islands in time* explores the islands of the ancient Mediterranean that achieved outstanding cultural development, flourishing as independent places with rich development and

extensive trade, prior to their invasion and conquest by continental neighbours.¹²

5600 BP (ca 3600 BC) the Mnjandra site on Malta was the site of an extensive temple of advanced engineering, normally termed the Ggantija phase, particularly the ones found on Gozo.¹³ The seven structures found so far on Malta and neighbouring Gozo indicate a highly organised society with skilled builders. There is no evidence that this culture was influenced by any other one at that time, but progressed as an independent entity out of trade. The resources to build such structures suggests considerable wealth and stability for those autonomous places, free from domination by their continental neighbours.

As time went on and those neighbours achieved their own levels of sophistication, military might and conquering zeal, they invaded Malta and the place remains today a site with extensive evidence of the numerous usurpers from Europe and elsewhere, continual conquests and domination by outsiders. Never again after conquest did Malta or Gozo achieve their potential for independent greatness.

Minoan culture centred on Crete, with its famous Knossos site, a capitol of culture and trade about 4000 years ago (2200 – 1700 BC); again, a flourishing island empire, spreading its influence, as far as one can determine, through trade and not conquest. Architectural style distinctively adorned neighbouring islands but, again, not through colonisation, but we might say today "soft power": people just liked the stylish way that Minoans designed themselves!

The motivating force seems to have been that peoples around the Minoan island thought enough of their innovations that they decided to copy and/or adapt them: no force was applied. It was just the quiet force of admiration. There is plenty of evidence that Minoan culture valued athletic skill and bravery: the famous bull leaping competitions that one can find in Portugal and, sometimes, southern France today attest to their continuing popularity. Whilst the humans who voluntarily entered the contest relying on their own skill and training, the animal at the centre of the exhibition remained unharmed. The "bullfight" of today's Spain may be related, but has developed very differently: the bull never wins.

The island peace cultures of Minorca, Sardinia and Corsica have left behind their impressive megalithic structures, but there are no written records for these civilisations that are thousands of years old. And their efflorescence came and went before their continental neighbours had been able to develop

9) <http://www.dokdo-takeshima.com/>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

10) http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/30/world/asia/what-china-has-been-building-in-the-south-china-sea-2016.html?_r=0. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

11) <http://mfa.gov.ct.tr/consular-info/visa-regulations/>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

12) Mark Patton. 1996. *Islands in time: Island sociogeography and Mediterranean prehistory*. London, Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/products/9780415642927>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

13) <http://heritagemalta.org/museums-sites/ggantija-temples/>. Accessed last on 4 May 2016.

writing and a curiosity for those around them.

Minorca, Sardinia and Corsica are not as spectacular as Malta and Crete, but they show the same characteristics of megalithic engineering and public architecture as their older neighbours.

These island peace cultures were the foundations of the more familiar what came after.

Gobekli Tepe: Not island, but peace amongst tribesmen¹⁴

Gobekli Tepe (literally “Potbelly Hill”, in Turkish) has been dubbed many times “the world’s oldest temple” and this appellation derives from archaeologists often assuming that anything that people build that is detailed and impressive must have religious significance.

But what if the purpose of the megalithic structures at Gobekli Tepe was not religious, but social? What if instead of worshiping imaginary, other worldly forces, people were organising themselves for peace? For social relations across a broad area before writing came about to provide media of communion?

There has been detailed archaeological work on the site since the 1990s, mostly directed by one scientist. His analysis points to the round structures with elaborate bas relief images as being ca 12,000 years old, flourishing for a time and, then, being peacefully and purposefully buried. There is no evidence that the burying of the series of buildings was the result of war, but simply that those who had erected the walls and platforms could see no further use for them and buried them from sight, as it turns out, for thousands of years.

Clearly, these structures predate any other megalithic culture on the planet. Also, of course, they predate writing by anyone on earth. If there ever had been an oral tradition about the place, it is long forgotten by those who have continued to live there or migrated in to the place, the latter being the Turkic peoples who began to arrive about a thousand years ago and are the modern population.

What leads me to believe Gobekli Tepe was a place of peace? There are images carefully and realistically carved into the stone slabs that have been uncovered. I think they serve to remind people of the life around them and the richness of that place, that today is a dry semi-desert. The purpose

of the place was to give the material culturally simple social groups around the area a place to meet and to interact. From the middens of animal bones, we can detect that considerable feasting took place.

Göbekli Tepe was an ideological island of peace where no conflict was allowed to take place. All evidence so far is that there are few human skeletons and none of these have the sort of trauma associated with violence.

Göbekli Tepe is an example of the human desire for a sociable and peaceful life. People there went to a good deal of trouble to construct this series of monuments, with no evidence in the area of any settlements of size. Perhaps Göbekli Tepe was an annual event marked by a natural occurrence, such as the shortest or longest day of the year? Perhaps it was marked by some natural event that to us today is unnoticed? Göbekli Tepe was built before humans lived in towns and it was built before, even, people had begun to cultivate crops and animals. Those who built these structures must have been hunters and gatherers. They were hunters and gatherers, though, who had the imagination to establish a place for peace as one of their most important and labour intensive tasks.

Conclusions

This paper argues that for islands to develop their full potential they must be autonomous, to the point of having sovereignty. This is the key to managing a green future for any island. From the dry plains of Anatolia (Göbekli Tepe) to the islands of the ancient Mediterranean autonomy and sovereignty are the features that most promote island welfare. People live on islands, but, as I have proposed, people can establish “islands”, especially of peace, on continents, such as the 12,000 year old monuments to cooperation and human management found at Göbekli Tepe, in what we call southern Turkey today.

The concept of sovereignty that is used today came out of a group of documents called “the Treaty of Westphalia that was agreed to on 24 October 1648, ending the “Thirty Years War” (1618–1648) and the “Eighty Years War” (1568–1648).¹⁵ Although focussed on individual states, the purpose of the treaty was to establish the modern and autonomous state, the emerging model for success in the contemporary world, for its own development and for general global development.

All too often, islands are yoked to continental land masses, sometimes to other islands in archipelagic states. In that way, the potential of the island also

14) Klaus Schmidt. 2013. Göbekli Tepe. Sanli Urfa, Arkeoloji Sanat Yayinlari. The late (deceased in 2014) Klaus Schmidt was the discoverer of Göbekli Tepe, but he died before the site really had been explored fully. The German Archaeological Institute (dainst.org) has been responsible for Schmidt’s work and continues its interest (Lee Clare, Oliver Dietrich & Jens Nortroff. 2015. “Göbekli Tepe, Türkei. Die Arbeiten der Jahre 2014 (Herbst) und 2015”. E-Forschungsberichte des DAI 2015. Pp. 149–151. Dr Lee Clare is the coordinator of excavations at Göbekli Tepe since 2015.

15) Derek Croxton and Anuschka Tischer. 2002. The Peace of Westphalia. A Historical Dictionary. Westport, Greenwood.

is yoked and unable to develop its full potential.

That is why the Republic of Korea granted Jeju the status of “Jeju Special Self-Governing Province effective 1 July 2006. This is moving Jeju island towards the status of a “Free International City”.¹⁶

Unfinished business for the people of Jeju Island includes closure for what is variously called “The Jeju Uprising”, “The Jeju Massacre” and, more evenly, “The Jeju 4.3 Incident”.¹⁷ It was 1948 and the early days of the Cold War that followed the end of World War II. Many innocent people died during that “incident”, manipulated by outside forces with the people of Jeju Island as the focus. The political and personal consequences of this “incident” remain not only on Jeju Island itself, but internationally.

When the matters of 4.3 are clear and resolved, so will Jeju be able to breath easy, with its own destiny. I suspect, too, that a full recognition and laying to rest of the 4.3 events also will influence broader relations on the Korean peninsula.

So, why do I focus the end of this discursive article on a small island – Jeju – in northeast Asia? Because for there to be peace we must consider not only the megalithic of politics, but also the intimate of social relations: the two are inseparable.

Set within “sovereignty” is the concept of “globalisation” a megalithic force that engulfs all nation states on Planet Earth. Globalisation brings about interlocking trade treaties, both bi-lateral and multi-lateral, that form a network of peaceful relations everywhere. One cannot have successful trade in the midst of raw war, an abiding, if palindromic, menace that threatens the future of individuals as well as all human kind. Globalisation brings about interlocking Third Party obligations, such as regional bodies for various purposes, the European Union and the United Nations, to name a few such institutions dedicated to the peaceful propagation of international relations based on respect on the one hand and enlightened self-interest on the other.

Globalisation brings about peoples mixing with other peoples in person, through travel and tourism, meetings and interactions, with perhaps the most typical of globalisation mixing being virtual as smart phones proliferate in the hands of those who can become smart persons. Not since the foundation of the “Universal Postal Union” in 1878 (foundation was 1874, but the name is from 1878)¹⁸ or the popularity of Internet driven communications devices in the 21st Century has the human race had the potential and reality to be more in touch

with one another. In both voice and text, people can send messages of various sorts to one another across the globe, giving the term “Globalisation” a meaning of communication.

One can paraphrase the Chinese leader and philosopher, Mao Zedong¹⁹

Power not only flows from the barrel of a gun, but from an Internet enabled screen

Guy Standing has written about his concept of the Precariat: people who may lose their livelihood at any moment.²⁰ I would extend the concept of “precariat” to islands and to nations. In the case of islands, global climate change may literally force people to evacuate their homes as the sea level rises over their shores. The loss of one’s livelihood can take many forms and come about in many ways, particularly in a globalised world where forces friendly and fierce can overwhelm without warning.

But our subject here is islands: small potentially future green islands and why we must think big about small islands.

As has often been said and written, our Earth is a relatively small place isolated in the vastness of intergalactic space and, as far as we know, the only place where we as humans effectively can survive. Just as people on small islands must get along to prosper, so must we humans do the same on our small island earth.

Perhaps this is the nissological lesson that islands can teach us: how to survive and grow on our small green islands on our small blue planet?

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16) “Jeju Consolidation Vote” Korea Times 29 November 2005.

17) The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3 Incident. 2003. The Jeju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report. Jeju, Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation.

18) Details from <http://www.upu.int/en/the-upu/the-upu.html>. Accessed on 10 May 2016.

19) So-called “Chairman Mao”, who lived from 26 December 1893 to 9 September 1976). There are several sources, but for introductory purposes see Delia Davin. 2013. Mao: A Very Short Introduction. London, Oxford University Press.

20) Guy Standing. 2014. A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens. London, Bloomsbury.

